CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.524
8 August 1989

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 8 August 1989, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. El Ghali Benhima (Morocco)

GE.89-62900/3741A

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The 524th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is called to order.

Today the Conference begins its consideration of item 8 on its agenda, entitled "Comprehensive programme of disarmament". However, in conformity with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, any representative who so wishes may raise any matter relating to the work of the Conference.

As you will remember, the Group of 21 has asked me to put before the Conference today for decision document CD/515/Rev.5, concerning the establishment of an ad hoc committee under item 3 of the agenda, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". Once we have heard the speaker on the list for today's plenary meeting, we shall hold an informal meeting to consider document CD/515/Rev.5. We will then resume the plenary immediately to continue consideration of this document and hear any representatives who wish to make statements on this subject.

On the list of speakers for today I have the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who, in his capacity as Chairman, will present the report of the Ad hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons, contained in document CD/938. I now give the floor to Ambassador Ardekani.

Mr. ARDEKANI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of August. I am sure that your special negotiating skill will prove invaluable to the Conference in this month of adoption of its reports. I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Bayart for the excellent way in which he presided over the work of the Conference during the month of July.

Ever since the nuclear age began, non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly those that do not belong to one of the major military alliances, have emphasized the need for effective measures to ensure their security against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. During the 1989 session the Committee on negative security assurances held 10 meetings at which States expressed their views on the issues. Although differences in approach persisted, there was a general feeling among delegations that the issue should be kept under active review, especially in the light of the fourth NPT review conference.

I would like to thank the delegations that participated in the work of the Committee, and especially the co-ordinators of the groups and China for their collaboration during the work and for the approval of the report of the Committee as well as for the efforts that made possible the adoption of the report within the time frame which had been agreed by the Conference. I would also like to extend my special thanks to the Secretary of the Ad hoc Committee, Mr. Gerardi-Siebert, and his associate, Miss Wilma Gibson, for their excellent co-operation with us during the course of our work.

(Mr. Ardekani, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Today I have the honour to submit the text of the Committee's report, contained in document CD/938 of 27 July 1989. As you can see, in the conclusions and recommendations the Committee agreed that an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances should be re-established at the beginning of the 1990 session of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee for introducing the report distributed as document CD/938, and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Ardekani and the members of the Ad hoc Committee on adopting the report one day before the date laid down in the timetable agreed with the chairmen of the ad hoc committees.

I have no more speakers on the list for today. However, in accordance with the Conference's usual practice, I will ask whether there are any representatives who wish to take the floor. I see that there are none. I now intend to suspend the plenary meeting and, following the practice of the Conference, to convene an informal meeting to consider the draft mandate contained in document CD/515/Rev.5 submitted by the Group of 21. The Conference will then resume the plenary meeting to continue consideration of this draft mandate and hear any representatives who may wish to speak on this subject. Accordingly, I suspend the plenary meeting; we shall continue in an informal meeting in approximately five minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.30 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The 524th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed. The Conference will continue its consideration of the draft decision submitted by the Group of 21 in document CD/515/Rev.5, concerning the establishment of an ad hoc committee under item 3 of the agenda of the Conference.

Are there any delegations that wish to take the floor before I put this document to the Conference? I give the floor to Ambassador Yamada.

Mr. YAMADA (Japan): Mr. President, I would like first of all, to extend my most sincere felicitations to you upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference for this important month in which we conclude the summer session. I am convinced that under your leadership we will have fruitful meetings. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to your predecessors, Ambassador García Robles and Ambassador Bayart.

The Group of Western Countries, on whose behalf I am speaking now, is disappointed to see that the mandate contained in document CD/515/Rev.5 is being proposed once again for decision by the Conference. We do not share the view that the submission of this draft mandate, which calls for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on agenda item 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", will facilitate our work on this subject. We are therefore, unable to associate ourselves with the proposed draft mandate. The Western Group has consistently stressed the special significance it attaches to in-depth consideration of agenda item 3. This interest grows from the overriding necessity of avoiding war and intimidation and strengthening international security and stability in the nuclear age.

(Mr. Yamada, Japan)

We believe that the problem of the prevention of nuclear war can only be dealt with satisfactorily in a broader context of the prevention of war in general. The arms control process, which encompasses nuclear as well as conventional and chemical weapons, should enhance stability in all its aspects, promote confidence and advance by stages which are both stabilizing and verifiable. It is with this objective in mind that we continue actively and constructively to approach this item.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the Western Group attaches the greatest importance to concrete policies and actions aimed at preventing all wars, including nuclear war. Equally, we continue to be willing to search jointly for and define an appropriate framework for the consideration of this agenda item within the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): First of all I should like to thank Ambassador Yamada for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. After listening to his statement on behalf of the Western Group, I note that there is at present no consensus on the draft decision contained in document CD/515/Rev.5. Do any other delegations wish to take the floor now? I give the floor to Ambassador Fan.

Mr. FAN (China) (translated from Chinese): The prevention of nuclear war is an item that relates to the security of every country in the world. The member States of the Conference on Disarmament share a common interest in it. The Chinese delegation, for its part has attached great importance to the item and has made its views known in many of its interventions and working papers. This year the Group of 21 has once again tabled document CD/515/Rev.5, which deals with the establishment and mandate of an ad hoc committee on the item. The Chinese delegation supports the Group of 21 in its endeavour and can accept the formula it has proposed. Naturally we will not rule out other formulae which are acceptable to all and will enable the Conference to commence work on this item.

Mr. SHARMA (India): Mr. President, as I take the floor for the first time during this month, let me express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you presiding over our work during August, which, as we know, is perhaps a demanding period as we have a deadline to meet. I have no doubt that under your wise chairmanship the Conference is in good hands, and my delegation would like to assure you of its full support in the discharge of your responsibilities. Let me also compliment Ambassador Bayart and Ambassador García Robles, who presided over our work during the previous months of the summer session. We will miss the wise presence of Ambassador Yamada and Ambassador van Schaik, who are leaving us shortly. I wish them success and happiness in their new assignments. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Rasaputram of Sri Lanka and assure him of my delegation's full co-operation.

We in the Group of 21 would like to express regret at the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to set up an ad hoc committee on agenda item 3. We have shown ourselves ready to exchange views on this subject, here or in the General Assembly. But some delegations have not agreed with this, as their priorities seem to be different.

(Mr. Sharma, India)

I do not need to emphasize the importance that our Group attaches to this item. We believe that the greatest peril facing the world is the threat of destruction from a nuclear war, and that consequently the removal of this threat is the most acute and urgent task of the present day. While nuclear-weapon States possess the primary responsibility for avoiding nuclear war, all nations have a vital interest in the negotiation of measures for prevention of nuclear war, in view of the catastrophic consequences that such a war would have for mankind. As far back as 1961, General Assembly resolution 1653 (XVI) declared that the use of nuclear weapons, besides being a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, would be contrary to the laws of humanity and a crime against mankind and civilization. The Harare Declaration adopted at the eighth Non-Aligned summit also emphasized this point and, accordingly, "urged nuclear-weapon States to agree, pending the achievement of nuclear disarmament, to the conclusion of an international treaty on the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons".

It is a matter of concern for all delegations present here that no progress has been possible on this item since its introduction as a separate item on the CD's agenda in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/183 G. During these years the arms race has accelerated, leading to the expansion and introduction of still more lethal warheads into the nuclear weapon stockpiles.

The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly requested the Conference on Disarmament to undertake, as a matter of the highest priority, negotiations with a view to achieving agreement on appropriate and practical measures for the prevention of nuclear war and to establish for that purpose an ad hoc committee on this subject. During the 1988 Assembly session there were three resolutions on this subject, which were adopted with overwhelming majorities. Two of these resolutions, 43/76 E on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and 43/78 F on prevention of nuclear war, were introduced by members of the Group of 21.

I would like to recall here the results of recent atmospheric and biological studies which indicate that in addition to blast, heat and radiation, a nuclear war, even on a limited scale would trigger an arctic nuclear winter, freezing the Earth into a darkened frozen planet. The conclusions of the studies have already been compiled in a report by the Secretary-General. In view of the irreversible consequences, it is clear that conventional wars cannot, under any circumstances, be equated with nuclear war since nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction. In view of this unique destructive power, invoking the Charter to justify the use of nuclear weapons in the exercise of the right of self-defence against conventional armed attack is neither legitimate nor justifiable. We remain convinced that the shortest way to remove the danger of nuclear war lies in the elimination of nuclear weapons, and that pending the achievement of nuclear disarmament, the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited. We have welcomed the declaration by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in November 1985 that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought", as also its reconfirmation in the joint statements issued subsequently. Now is the time to translate this will into a binding commitment.

(Mr. Sharma, India)

In deference to the position of the other delegations, the Group of 21 has put forward, in CD/515/Rev.5 dated 27 July 1989, a non-negotiating mandate that will permit thorough consideration of all aspects - legal, political, technical, military - of all the proposals before the Conference. We believe that such consideration will not only contribute to better understanding of the subject but also pave the way for negotiations for an agreement on prevention of nuclear war. Such an objective cannot be achieved only through discussions in the plenary or informal meetings. We are disappointed, therefore, that despite the urgency accorded to this subject and the flexibility displayed by the Group of 21, the CD is not able to discharge its own mandate, which is reflected in paragraph 120 of the Final Document of SSOD-I. We would like to hope that the importance of the matter will lead to a rethinking on the part of those who have expressed reservations on the mandate proposed by the Group of 21.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Sharma of India for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on Ambassador Kostov of Bulgaria.

Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria): Mr. President, may I take this opportunity to extend to you the felicitations of my delegation on your accession to the presidency of the Conference for the month of August? We are confident that your well-known diplomatic skills and long experience will help you to give the Conference the necessary direction and momentum to do its work in the concluding phase for this year. I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassadors García Robles of Mexico and Bayart of Mongolia, for their excellent work as presidents of the Conference during the months of June and July respectively. I would also like to express a heartfelt welcome to Ambassador Rasaputram of Sri Lanka and offer him the co-operation of my delegation.

On behalf of the Group of Socialist Countries I would like to make the following statement in connection with document CD/515/Rev.5, submitted by the Group of 21 for decision by the Conference.

First, socialist countries continue to attach great importance to item 3 of the Conference's agenda - "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". In its appeal to NATO member States adopted in Sofia on 30 March 1988, the Committee of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States Parties to the Warsaw Treaty stated:

> "There is a growing conviction throughout the world that nuclear war should never be unleashed and that there can be no victors in such a war, that all wars, whether nuclear or conventional, must be prevented, that the creation of a secure peace calls for the manifestation of new political thinking, a new approach to the issues of war and peace, and presupposes the total elimination of nuclear weapons, renunciation of the concept of 'nuclear deterrence' and of a policy of the use or threat of force in relations between States."

This year's meeting of the Warsaw Treaty member States which took place in Bucharest on 7 and 8 July confirmed the position of the Warsaw Treaty Organization countries, underlining their "attachment ... to the ideal of

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

ridding mankind of the threat of war by doing away with nuclear and chemical weapons and drastically reducing conventional weapons". This is the reason why socialist countries have for years now insisted that the Conference should proceed to practical work on its agenda item 3.

Second, the draft mandate contained in document CD/515/Rev.5, presented by the Group of 21, is a goal-oriented one. It provides for the establishment by the Conference of an ad hoc committee under agenda item 3. While socialist countries have been open to any procedural arrangement that would allow the Conference to commence concrete work on item 3, they still believe that the establishment of an ad hoc committee offers the best available machinery for the conduct of its activities on agenda item 3.

Third, in our submission the draft mandate is both flexible and comprehensive. It provides that the Conference should request the ad hoc committee to "consider all proposals relevant to agenda item 3", and "take into account all existing proposals and future initiatives".

Fourth, the draft mandate deals on an equal footing with all aspects of agenda item 3. It would allow the ad hoc committee to consider both the issue of prevention of nuclear war and the issue of all related matters.

It is for these reasons that socialist countries support the draft mandate proposed by the Group of 21, and we regret that it is not possible to adopt it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Before turning to another subject, I should like to thank Ambassador Kostov for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. In accordance with the agreement reached by my predecessor with the chairmen of the ad hoc committees concerning the timetable to be followed for the adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies, I intend to put before the Conference for decision at our next plenary meeting the report of the Ad hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons, contained in document CD/938, which has been introduced today by the Committee's Chairman.

Today the secretariat has distributed the English version of document CD/OS/CRP.6, which contains the draft report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. We hope that the report will be available in the other languages for the meeting of the Ad hoc Committee.

If there are no other matters to be considered at this plenary meeting, I will close the meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 10 August at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.